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CHARTER UPDATE

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MAY 1980
NEWSLETTER OF THE
SAN FRANCISCO
CHARTER COMMISSION

Photo by Ellen Bailey

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SAN FRANCISCANS SPEAK OUT ON CHARTER REVISION

All too often these days, the concept of participatory democracy remains an ideal for students to read about in civics books. But in February and March, 1980, the Charter Commission actually put those ideas into practice.

Hundreds of San Franciscans, recognizing the importance of the charter to the operation of city government, took part in more than 40 meetings held to discuss the Commission's first draft proposals.

Twelve of these meetings were co-sponsored by the Board of Supervisors, the rest by civic and community groups throughout the city.

About 60 energetic volunteers, many from the League of Women Voters and the Barristers Club, led the discussions and recorded the comments made there. Commissioners attended the meetings, answering questions about the new proposals and listening to the people who came.

This was an experimental process, and no one knew just how it would work. We found that discussions varied widely, from educational sessions for groups who were not familiar with the charter and its provisions, to highly sophisticated debates about technical areas of personnel policy. Some meetings were large and noisy, others small and quiet. Some took place in downtown offices, others in homes, schools and libraries.

As those who took part know, the discussions centered on 15 key questions about which the Commissioners particularly wanted feedback. These ranged from the role of the Mayor to the powers of the Supervisors, budget procedures, and other issues essential to city government.

We found that the issues to do with boards and commissions sparked the greatest number of comments from meeting participants. The first draft lists six commissions (civil service, planning, permit appeals, human rights, police and fire), to be named in the charter with others established by ordinance for all service delivery departments.

Many groups wanted to have the Commission which represents "their" interest named in the charter, too, fearing that, if it were not named, it could be easily eliminated. Senior groups, for example, advocated naming the Commission on the Aging in the new charter.

Overall, participants favored retaining boards and commissions because they involve citizens in government and they provide a place where the public can be heard.

Cont'd on page 5

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NEWSLETTER OF THE
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Photo by Ellen Bailey

WHY WE NEED A NEW CHARTER

1) **You said so.** The People of San Francisco voted twice to review and revise the charter: in June and November, 1978. At the November election you elected 15 Commissioners to do this.

2) **It's too old.** The current charter was written 48 years ago during the Depression in 1932, a watershed year in the history of American government, at the beginning of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. 1980 seems to be a watershed year of a different kind because of Propositions 13 and 4, and the potential passage of Proposition 9. Now, however, government is being limited, rather than expanded, as in 1932, and the revenues coming into the city are much more dependent upon the state and federal government. Because the city needs flexibility to deal with these changes, it is an important time to revise the current out-of-date charter.

3) **It's rigid, complex and detailed.** It has not stood the test of time. While the United States Constitution has been amended only 26 times in almost 200 years, the San Francisco Charter has had to be amended over 500 times in just 48 years.

The current charter specifies such minutiae as the titles of police inspectors, maximum and minimum ages of patrol special officers, which officials have the combination of the city safe, and who should be present when the safe is opened. Details like this should be in ordinances or in administrative regulations. Presently, because they are in the charter, these details can only be changed by a vote of the people. This is why San Francisco has so many ballot items on minor matters.

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Cont'd on page 5

SAN FRANCISCO CHARTER COMMISSION

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Jack Webb

Office:
170 Fell Street
Room 16
San Francisco 94102
552-7887

Photo by Ellen Bailey

This is the first of a three-issue newsletter published by the San Francisco Charter Commission. From our first meeting, we have held as a high priority the involvement of San Franciscans in the charter revision process. So we approached several foundations to ask their financial support for an educational and outreach program, which we felt was essential if a new charter is to meet the needs of City residents. This newsletter, as well as other means of bringing our message to you, has been paid for not by tax dollars, but by our independent fundraising efforts.

We wish to thank those foundations for their generous support, and for their concern for San Francisco's future. They are: the San Francisco Foundation, the Rosenberg Foundation, the Gerbode Foundation and the California Council for the Humanities.

And we wish to invite all our readers to get in touch with us, phone or write with your suggestions, visit our office at 170 Fell Street . . . and join with us as we prepare a new charter for the years to come.

—The Charter Commissioners

WHY WE NEED . . .

Cont'd from page 1

4) **It's not understandable.** And because it is not understandable, it is not accessible to the average voter. Because the charter is so full of detail and has evolved in a jerry-built way over the years, it is not coherent. The people who thoroughly understand it are city workers who deal with it every day. Others, ranging from neighborhood activists to lawyers with clients having problems with the city, have complained that the charter is incomprehensible. The City Attorney has said that his office spends about half its time interpreting the charter;

- Suppose you are a widow of a fireman and want to find out what your rights are to your husband's pension, where does the charter say this; who will help you understand your rights?
- Suppose you are part of a citizen's group which wants to make suggestions on how the health or park or social service moneys are spent: when you look at the budget it will not tell you the total amount spent for programs, and it may not include federal grant money which may pay for parts of the services. Then, if you look at the charter, how would you tell which department or person has responsibility for the service you are concerned with?

The less understandable the charter, the fewer people who can use it, and the harder it is for people to participate in city government.

5) **We need a more effective city government.** City services are, of all government services, the ones which most directly affect your daily life. If you woke up one morning and the city government had vanished from earth, you would know as soon as you turned on the faucet and no water came out. In this fantasy scene you might see houses burning and no firefighters coming, crime in the street and no police responding. If anyone were injured and you called for city emergency services to send an ambulance, the phone would just ring. You couldn't get to work because Muni would not exist; your children would have no school to go to, no supervision in the parks.

The charter determines relationships among these services; and while it cannot promise to provide better services, it can be revised so that better, more modern management will be allowed, and not prohibited. By getting a charter that is understandable and clear, you can remove the roadblocks to better management in the level of government which affects you most.

6) **The city can't afford it.** Many modern management innovations are forbidden by the charter: for example, the charter specifies the type of budget which must be used. Now, when dollars are drastically limited, the city needs to spend money on the most important things first, and to be able to make changes that don't cost money but would improve services.

We invite readers to write us, giving their reasons why the current charter no longer satisfies San Francisco's needs. We will publish them in our next two issues.

Spread the word about charter revision! The Commission will have, by June, a slide/tape show which illustrates, in an entertaining and informative way, the importance of the charter to the running of San Francisco. We have set up a speakers' bureau, and will be happy to arrange for a speaker to bring the slide/tape show to the next meeting of your group and to answer questions. Please call Ann Gonski at 552-7887 to make arrangements.

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Photograph by Bruman Bros.

Lonergan *Gallagher* *Schmitz*
Wilson

EX-MAYOR SCHMITZ AND HIS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

CHARTERS IN SAN FRANCISCO HISTORY

San Francisco, still a comparatively young city, has often been compared for its character and beauty to some of the greatest cities of all . . . London, Paris, Athens, Baghdad, Constantinople! And in the United States, San Francisco is most beloved among cities, almost a legend. In fact, one famous presidential candidate once said, "I love this city. If I'm elected I'll move the White House to San Francisco."

Like all great cities, ours has had its rocky times and periods of reform and adjustment. Much of our early history, rooted in the gold rush era, has been romanticized with images of heroes and villains, beautiful women and bawdy saloon fights. What is often left out is the lives of the people, the commerce, and the running of the city.

In the late 1800's San Francisco was a trading town, providing the goods needed by the miners prospecting for gold in the Sierras. It became an important depot for transporting the gold from the ground to the nation's banks.

San Francisco's first mayors were beset by problems, the city streets were muddy bogs and rats roamed wild. They needed to: "build more wharves, to establish wells and cisterns on public squares . . . to erect market places, to remove garbage from the streets, to organize a police force, to light the city at night by street lamps . . ."

By the turn of the century one out of every four Californians lived in San Francisco. (While the city had a population of almost 300,000, Los Angeles was still a sleepy town of 6,000.)

In San Francisco's early history, when city government was barely established and city officials could not control the huge influx of people into the city or the ensuing lawlessness, citizens took the law into their own hands and developed vigilante bands to take care of crime and ensure public safety. But most citizens did not approve of this and wanted to see problems solved through "honest government" in the form of a basic legal charter of government.

By 1898, it was clear that San Francisco needed to revise and strengthen the body of laws governing the city. So 100 notables picked from San Francisco's "Blue Book" gathered to draft a city charter. This charter (the city's constitution) outlined the manner in which the city would be run, and established some new municipal concepts for San Francisco. (It introduced the idea of a budget and set a minimum wage for city employees of $1.00 a day.)

The boom town atmosphere of San Francisco in the early 1900's made good government difficult as power became more and more centralized in a few hands. From 1904 to 1908 the mayor, Eugene Schmitz, was literally in the pocket of Boss Reuff and the corrupt Union Labor Party. The immense political and economic power of the Southern Pacific and Market Street Railways corrupted government rather thoroughly.

The terrible shock of the 1906 earthquake and fire was followed by the aftershock of Schmitz's corruption trial, which left an indelible mark on peoples' attitudes towards

The Ferry Building looked like this when our city's first charter was written in 1898.

Market Street looked like this when our current charter was passed in 1932.

government.

In 1911 "Sunny" Jim Rolph was elected mayor and ruled the city for 19 years. Rolph took credit for many sweeping reforms in the city but people still weren't satisfied, and by the 1920's the seeds were being sown for the charter revision of a decade later.

The forces pushing for change were many and came from a variety of sources. One was San Francisco's increasing importance as a national commercial center. By the first decades of the century San Francisco was the most important West Coast City. (In fact it has been called the only East Coast City west of the Mississippi!)

As banking and finance increased in importance, the workforce gradually changed from predominantly longshoremen, construction workers and transit workers to white collar and civil service employees. An airport was built, hospitals, schools and housing developed, and the public utilities system expanded.

In 1930 the Board of Supervisors voted for a 15 member revision committee (representing all interests in the city) to begin redrafting the charter. And it came none too soon. By this time the old charter had been changed and amended so many times the San Francisco *Examiner* said, "It resembles an old sheet iron stove patched with pieces of tomato can fastened on with haywire." The charter passed in 1932 is the one we still use today. With all its amendments (over 500) it too has come to look like the old patched iron stove of its predecessor.

The time is again upon us to show that this city knows how! With the dramatic changes brought about in California with the passage of Propositions 13 and 4, San Francisco is taking the bit between the teeth and redrafting a charter that will create a stable, flexible and accountable form of city government.

Photos courtesy of the San Francisco Public Library

OUR CURRENT CHARTER

Perhaps the best brief description of San Francisco's 1932 charter is found in Professor Frederick Wirt's classic study ***Power in the City:***

"In 1932 the voters approved a charter whose primary purpose was to prevent widespread corruption. It succeeded admirably. Indeed, the charter divided the power and structure of government into so many pieces that if officials wanted to be corrupt, it would hardly be worth their while. But the price for achieving this honesty was to make those who govern San Francisco impotent, to rob them of coordinated instruments for meeting emergent urban problems. The cover of a League of Women Voters' volume fully caught the essence of the city's government. A Calder-like mobile has figures frozen in midair and interconnected in inexplicable ways by wildly zooming lines. A mobile is a thing of beauty, but hardly functional . . .

"Administrative power is split among a mayor, a chief administrative officer, a comptroller, boards and commissions, and an entirely independent school board. The charter also mandates rigid and extensive civil service and merit systems . . . The personnel system is so frozen by the city charter that ordinary personnel changes, like adding one more police sergeant to the lists, requires a referendum . . .

"Every time even the most minor charter change — often only administrative — is required, there must be a referendum. Though only a tiny minority of San Franciscans understand the minutiae of these proposals, at every election where the turnout rate is usually high, they are confronted with ten to twenty of them . . .

"When the successful outcome of policy must rest on the agreement of so many private groups and public authorities, the power of one component to block any action is magnified. Over time, consequently, only minor policy adjustments are possible, but it is highly doubtful whether these add up to an adequate response to deep and widespread community problems. Instead, the bulk of public policy is made by clerks beyond the reach of the electorate. Each of these can affect only small sections of the government, but cumulatively their little decisions make up a totality of public policy. What San Francisco has, then, is government by clerks. Moreover, the central drift of the pattern of these decisions can best be characterized as nondecision. And the decision **not to act** has as much public consequence as the decision to **act.**"

"YOUTH SHOULD BE REPRESENTED IN THE CHARTER COMMISSION"

This statement appeared at the head of a petition signed by 200 students and teachers in January, 1979. It grew out of a feeling that students need to be involved in the charter revision process. I drafted the statement with the support of a teacher and presented it to the Charter Commissioners, who liked the idea. In October, 1979, I began as a volunteer and developed a program to involve and educate youth in the work of the Charter Commission through a series of high school classes.

In February, 1980, I moved from being a volunteer to a position on the staff. With the encouragement of Glen W. Sparrow, I approached several foundations; the Rosenberg Foundation awarded a grant of $3,500 to fund a school project.

Since then I have had outstanding support from the San Francisco Unified School District. With the help of Dr. F. Armand Magid, Curriculum Specialist, and Dr. Earl Minkwitz, Consultant, I developed a curriculum on the Charter Commission and charter revision for use in all San Francisco high schools, public, private and parochial. They also helped me organize a training session for 30 social science teachers, which took place in March. I am offering teachers speakers from the Charter Commission to address their classes. I am also giving students the opportunity to be directly involved in the revision process by setting up a workshop in which they may propose a preamble for the revised charter. Any young people interested may volunteer in the Charter Commission office or assist with our street fair booths.

As one who has recently graduated from high school, I feel it is important to involve youth; we are the community leaders of tomorrow, and we have to spend much of our lives under the future charter. Our ideas are progressive and creative, and can prove valuable for the future. **Valerie Nin Rosenkrantz**

SAN FRANCISCANS . . .

Cont'd from page 1

Personnel issues rated a close second in number of responses, with many participants criticizing the current system for its interminable delays in giving exams and other procedures, and for retaining employees on temporary status for up to ten, 15 and 20 years. Overall, participants supported collective bargaining for city employees while opposing the right to strike. In addition, considerable support was expressed for the civil service reform proposed in the first draft.

The role of the Supervisors and the Mayor in running the city tied for third place, as meeting participants weighed the pros and cons of the Commission's proposals. Many people wanted to retain an elected assessor and treasurer, and expressed reservations about concentrating power in the office of the mayor. Others, however, favored the Commission plan, feeling that it enhanced good management, reduced the fragmentation of responsibility and placed more power ultimately in the hands of the voters.

For those who were unable to attend the meetings, or who had additional testimony to offer the Commission, three city-wide hearings were held at the State Building during the first week of March.

Commission staff went over the records of each meeting, tabulated the number and kinds of responses, and gave those to the Commissioners. The Commissioners are now carefully considering those critiques and suggestions as they work on the second draft.

"This meeting process was very valuable to the Commission as a whole and to me personally," said Commission Chair Wilson Chang.

The Charter Commissioners thank all the volunteers whose time and intelligence contributed so much to the success of the discussion meetings; Regina Sneed, who conducted the training meetings; and all the Supervisors and organization leaders from San Francisco's many communities who helped to set up the meetings.

Newsletter Questions and Answers

This list of questions was taken from those we are most frequently asked. We hope, for the next newsletters, that you will write in your questions and we will answer them in this space.

Q: *Why pay attention to the charter?*
A: The charter is the framework for the government of the City and County of San Francisco. It determines who runs the city, how they will be chosen, and what powers they will have. The charter sets conditions for city workers: wages, benefits, hiring and firing procedures. The charter also sets up the ways in which people can take part in running their city.

Q: *Are there limits on what a new charter can do?*
A: Yes. Some problems are beyond the scope of any city government. A new charter cannot directly solve certain kinds of problems facing the city and its residents: crime, inflation, housing, and unemployment, for example. But it can improve the delivery of city services which improve the quality of life. The charter also cannot contradict either state or federal law.

Q: *Can a new charter help San Francisco weather the financial crisis posed by Propositions 13 and 4, and possibly 9?*
A: Since Propositions 13 and 4 are state law, they take precedence over City and County law. By making less money available, they cut into city spending. The proposed new charter is intended to streamline city government, thereby saving funds which can then be spent elsewhere. Under its provisions, every resident can know just how much money the city has and where it is spent. The city cannot spend more than it takes in.

Q: *What can you do about charter revision?*
A: Write, phone or visit the Commission office at 170 Fell Street, Room 16, 552-7887, and ask for our brochure and a schedule of Commission meetings. If you have a special concern or suggestion, let the Commission know about it. Send the names of interested friends to us so we can put them on our mailing list. Help us to spread the word about the Charter Commission and its work so that the new charter can truly meet the needs of San Francisco and its residents.

Charter Revision: What's it all about?

SAN FRANCISCO
CHARTER COMMISSION
170 Fell Street, Room 16
San Francisco 94102

CHARTER UPDATE

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PUBLIC HEARINGS ON CHARTER REVISION

JUNE

	TUESDAY 17 Everett Jr HS Church & 17th Sts 7–10 PM Muni J, K, L, M, 22 Childcare	**WEDNESDAY 18** Roosevelt Jr HS Geary & Arguello 7–10 PM Muni 38, 1 Sign interpreter Wheelchair access	**THURSDAY 19** Marina Jr HS Chestnut & Steiner 7–10 PM Muni 22, 28, 30		**SATURDAY 21** Pelton Jr HS 45 Conklin 10 AM – 1 PM Muni 51
MONDAY 23 State Building 350 McAllister Room 1194 11 AM – 2 PM Muni 5, 19 Sign interpreter Wheelchair access	**TUESDAY 24** James Denman Jr HS 241 Oneida 7–10 PM Muni 12, 15, 28, 26 Wheelchair access	**WEDNESDAY 25** Abraham Lincoln HS 2162 24th Avenue 7–10 PM Muni L, 28, 66			

Charter Revision: It's about your future!

This newsletter was partially funded by the San Francisco Foundation, the Gerbode Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the California Council for the Humanities.

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CHARTER UPDATE

JULY 1980

NEWSLETTER OF THE
SAN FRANCISCO
CHARTER COMMISSION

Photo by Anne Dauer

"Charter Revision: What's It All About?" This question emblazoned on bright banners in three languages greets people when they approach our display which travels to parks and fairs every weekend.

FORMER POLICE CHIEF SAYS 1980'S REQUIRE MODERN CHARTER

"We need a flexible charter. One that will allow those in authority in the city, those responsible for providing services, to adjust to the changes taking place without the extreme restrictions embodied in the charter of 1932."

So says Commissioner Thomas J. Cahill, and he should know. Cahill was the Chief of the San Francisco Police Department from 1958–1970, during what he calls "those most difficult, changing years." He describes how he has seen the city change in the past 15–20 years from a demographically stable population to a very mobile one. During the boom years of World War II great numbers of people, especially unskilled workers, were brought to San Francisco to work in the shipyards. After the war we had a surplus of unskilled labor in the San Francisco bay area, which Cahill says led to a greater demand on city govern-

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THE SECOND DRAFT: WE LISTENED TO YOU

by Commissioner Rodney Johnson

When our first draft was published in January this year, we had little idea how the public would receive it. After the hearings last year, six months had been spent studying the current San Francisco charter and other charters, as well as meeting with city officials and numerous people who work closely with the charter. But until we heard from you, the people, we realized we would not know whether or not we had produced a good document.

So the Commission organized over 40 meetings throughout the city and for two months we went around listening, explaining, and discussing the first draft. We heard enthusiastic support and strong criticism, including many valuable suggestions. We took all that information, worked through it, and now have a second draft for discussion which shows many changes from the first.

Changes From the First Draft

Commissions: One of the concerns we heard repeatedly after the first draft was released was that boards and commissions should be protected by listing them in the charter. So, while only six commissions were named in the first draft, all commissions presently named by the charter are included in the second draft, as well as the Human Rights Commission. Much of the detail hampering each commission and the department it oversees has been removed. We have created a new commission to oversee the Health Department, which is currently under the Chief Administrative Officer.

Checks and Balances: Many people told us they thought the mayor had been given too much administrative authority in the first draft, especially over financial affairs, with the power to appoint a treasurer, assessor, and the financial administrator to replace the current controller. So in the second draft, the treasurer and the assessor remain elected with their current duties, while the controller is appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the board for a six-year term.

The two professional managers created in the first draft to aid the mayor in administering the city remain. The Director of Administration, a radically modified CAO, will serve a four-year term concurrent with that of the mayor and can be removed only with the consent of the board. The Director of Management and Budget will serve at the pleasure of the

Cont'd on page 2

SAN FRANCISCO CHARTER COMMISSION

Wilson Chang
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Secretary
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Thomas Cahill
Agnes Chan
Eulalio Frausto
James Haas
Pat Jackson
Leo Jed
Haig G. Mardikian
Pat Schultz
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Samuel W. Walker
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Photo by Ellen Bailey

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And we wish to invite all our readers to get in touch with us, phone or write with your suggestions, visit our office at 170 Fell Street . . . and join with us as we prepare a new charter for the years to come.

—The Charter Commissioners

SECOND DRAFT

Cont'd from page 1

mayor and be responsible for preparing and administering the budget and coordinating the planning activities of the various units of city government.

We feel that this system maintains the checks and balances which so many citizens wanted to see in their government while making it clear that elected officials are in charge and accountable to the electorate.

Changes From the Current Charter

Mayor: The administrative reins of government are placed in the mayor's hands. Rather than have each city department pulling separately in its own direction, the mayor's office, with the aid of the professional managers, will coordinate and supervise all departments. The mayor will no longer be prohibited from getting involved in the day-to-day operation of the departments and will be given a greater role in choosing department heads.

Supervisors: The second draft, like the first, retains district election of supervisors. The eleven supervisors will be more involved in policy making and less tied down by the minutiae of government. While under the present charter the supervisors are only allowed to decrease the budget, under the proposed charter they will be able to change the spending priorities so long as they stay within the limits of the mayor's budget. Supervisors will also be responsible for investigating and evaluating the spending and performance of the executive departments through the help of a legislative auditor. Finally, the supervisors have the power to enact ordinances to cover those areas which have been removed from the charter, such as purchasing.

Personnel: The merit system is retained for hiring and promoting city employees. The civil service commission, separated from day-to-day personnel operations, will review and approve the personnel rules submitted by the personnel director and also hear appeals.

A more flexible system of setting wages and terms of employment will be allowed, but not mandated. If both the city and the labor unions wish to, they may enter into collective bargaining negotiations, and any agreement they reach could replace the existing formula provisions. If either the city or the union does not wish to bargain, or if an impasse is reached during negotiations, the present formulas prevail. In other words, the formulas will act as control to limit the total dollar package and to settle impasses. Strikes will still be prohibited. Under this system, unions will be able to bargain for benefits and conditions of employment rather than wages only, for example exchanging wages for a dental plan or more vacation time. And the city could additionally bargain for changes in work rules.

Objectives: Finally, the Commission was very encouraged during the hearings by people's agreement with our basic premise for making changes in the present charter. The proposed charter modernizes the present charter which was written in 1932 and has been amended over 500 times. It reduces the costly and frustrating division of authority between the various parts of city government, and puts elected officials primarily in charge. Thus, the voters can simply refuse to re-elect unsatisfactory officials, and the whole city government is simplified and more responsive to the will of the people.

The Charter Commissioners wish to thank all of you who take an interest in our work, and hope that, if you have final comments or suggestions, you will call us at 552-7887, or write us at 170 Fell Street, San Francisco, California 94102.

COMMISSIONER CAHILL

Cont'd from page 1

ment for social services.

"People are demanding more of their city now," he says, "but some are not willing to balance that demand with equal contribution of effort and energy. This contribution leads to an erosion of pride in one's city and less respect for one's neighbors." Cahill believes that "In light of the current tight economic situation and the lack of tax money to meet all the demands, people are going to have to be more self-reliant and respect the rights and property of others."

At the same time, the citizens need to feel that they can approach the persons who provide services and receive prompt satisfaction rather than being passed from one department to the next. They should know who is in charge and what can be expected of them. "When you don't understand the charter, you make unreasonable demands on your city government. So we need a shorter, more understandable, less complicated charter . . . then the people will know how to use it."

The man who earned himself a reputation of fearlessness, dedication and professionalism during his 28 years in the police department is bringing these traits with him into the charter revision process. Cahill can be seen regularly at commission meetings, public hearings and addressing large groups (such as the retired employees at their luncheon meeting). He energetically insists that people take a hand in the revision process and tell the Commissioners what they want to see in their city government. "We're tought," he quips, "we've heard some strong criticism of our efforts, but we don't mind. We can take it; just tell us what you like and what you don't like. We want this to be your charter."

Cahill has had his own problems working with the present charter. While chief of the police department, he faced personnel shortages. Charter provisions which list in detail the classifications of police positions with numbers and categories of officers made his job extremely difficult.

Under the proposed charter this kind of problem, among others, will be improved by reorganizing the Civil Service Commission and eliminating the rigid detail.

Does this mean limiting public involvement in the affairs of the city? Cahill answers with an emphatic "NO!"

He sees the commission as a vital way of ensuring public participation. "Take the Police Commission," he says, "it represents the people from a civilian point of view. Some citizens feel more at ease going to a civilian commissioner with a complaint against the police than to the department itself. Its responsibility is to oversee the department and make sure the work is being professionally carried out. From my experience, I say commissioners are a necessity."

Questions and Answers

Q: *What do city department heads in San Francisco see as the major problems in managing the city, and what has the Charter Commission done about them?*

A: Department heads identified three major problem areas: budget, personnel and purchasing. The Charter Commission reviewed these issues and carried out lengthy consultations with fiscal, personnel and procurement experts. The proposed new charter specifies systems reflecting modern management techniques to replace the existing piece-meal procedures. The Commissioners have developed flexible, effective means of meeting the requirements of actually running the city.

Q: *Does the new charter remove the traditional independence of the Controller, who is the watchdog of city funds?*

A: No, it doesn't. The proposed new charter requires what may be the most stringent financial procedures of any city in the U.S., G.A.A.P. Generally Accepted Accounting Procedures lay down specific rules which guard against mis-appropriation of funds and require sound financial controls. The Controller will be appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Board to a six-year term.

The new charter requires the Controller to issue a Comprehensive Financial Statement within 120 days after the close of the fiscal year; this is to correct the current situation where the city's bond rating fell because no statement had been issued.

Q: *What about the Chief Administrative Officer under the new charter?*

A: The proposed new charter specifies a Director of Administration, which is a modified version of the current CAO position. The holder of that office is appointed by the Mayor to a four-year term concurrent with that of the Mayor. The Director of Administration is given independence during that term, being removable only with the consent of a majority of the Supervisors.

Q: *What does the new charter say about the arts?*

A: It assures some funding for both neighborhood and city-wide arts by assigning a portion of the hotel tax for the support of arts, culture and promotional organizations. The Commissioners feel this is important for two main reasons: because studies show that public money expended for arts brings in at least three times that amount into the city (parking, hotels, restaurants) and because in times of fiscal austerity arts are often the first institutions to be cut off. Since tourism is our major industry and highly labor-intensive, we wish to ensure that those important attractions remain.

Q: *Won't all these changes throw the city into chaos?*

A: NO. The new charter provisions will be integrated gradually into the city administration. The mechanism for doing this is spelled out in the transition portion of the charter. The new charter begins the transition on July 1, 1981.

Q: *What happens if the charter doesn't pass in November?*

A: We return to the system of piecemeal change and amendment of the current charter. To make any overall changes we'd first have either another referendum to elect a Charter Commission, or the Mayor and the Board would appoint a Charter Commission, to go through this whole process all over again. That would require large expenditures of time and money.

Charter Revision: What's it all about?

SAN FRANCISCO
CHARTER COMMISSION
170 Fell Street, Room 16
San Francisco 94102

CHARTER UPDATE

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Does this old car remind you of our city charter? For Ron Atwood, producer of the Charter Commission Slide–Tape show, it was this image that resolved a seemingly insolvable problem —how to turn the complex and legalistic details of charter revision into an understandable and enjoyable show. Atwood's short lively visual production traces San Francisco's colorful history of charter revision and points out the weaknesses in our current charter. The show was written and produced with a grant from the California Council for the Humanities. It is now available and can be shown to your group or organization. A speaker from the commission will accompany the show and answer your questions concerning the proposed new charter. To schedule the show and a speaker for your group call Ann Gonski at 552-7887.

Charter Revision: It's about your future!

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CHARTER UPDATE

FALL 1980

NEWSLETTER OF THE
SAN FRANCISCO
CHARTER COMMISSION

COMMISSION SUBMITS NEW CHARTER FOR NOVEMBER 4TH BALLOT

"We are proud to bring you the results of two years of diligent and intelligent work by San Francisco's duly elected Charter Commissioners," said Commission Chair Wilson Chang August 5 as he handed over the completed new charter to Hon. John Molinari, President of the Board of Supervisors.

The Charter proposal will be on the November 4 ballot to be approved by the voters.

"I consider myself the father of charter revision," Molinari told the Commissioners gathered at City Hall. "I had the honor of carrying the legislation which put the charter revision on the ballot in 1978, and which got you elected to do the job. I know that the charter needs revision for the 1980s. You've served the city well."

The Commissioners, who were not paid to do this work, reached out to learn what San Franciscans wanted to see in their new charter. "We have spent hundreds — no, thousands — of hours meeting with citizens, discussing their suggestions, debating solutions," said Chang, "And I think we've produced a document that makes some pretty important changes in our local government — changes that will improve the running of our City."

Dozens of civic and community groups held meetings to discuss charter revision. Among them were the League of Women Voters, the Council of San Francisco Neighborhoods, Democratic and Republican Central Committees, SPUR, the Chamber of Commerce, and the San Francisco Labor Council. Others were the Alice B. Toklas and Harvey Milk Gay Democratic Clubs, the Council of District Merchants, La Raza, the National Women's Political Caucus, the Black Ministers' Alliance, the Chinese-American Democratic Club, the Municipal Executives' Association, and many more. Chang expressed his thanks to all who took part in the revision process.

March Fong Eu, California Secretary of State, witnessed the signing of the proposed charter on August 5, and told guests at the ceremony, "Many cities and counties in the State talk about writing or revising their charters, but San Francisco actually got on the ball and did it!" She affixed the Grand Seal of the State on the completed charter.

The ceremony, held in the San Francisco History Room of the Main Library, was attended by many of the people who have played an active role in drafting the document. Representatives of the American Civil Liberties Union, Arts Advocates, Deputy Police Chief Stan Cordes, District Attorney Arlo Smith, Public Defender Jeff Brown and others were among those on hand to congratulate the Commissioners on finishing their task.

Photo by C. Malcolm Thompson

Secretary of State March Fong Eu affixes the State Seal to the proposed new city charter at the signing ceremony.

Photo by: C. Malcolm Thompson

The Charter Commission and staff.

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This is the last of a three-issue newsletter published by the San Francisco Charter Commission. From our first meeting, we have held as a high priority the involvement of San Franciscans in the charter revision process. So we approached several foundations to ask their financial support for an educational and outreach program, which we felt was essential if a new charter is to meet the needs of City residents. This newsletter, as well as other means of bringing our message to you, has been paid for, not by tax dollars, but by our independent fundraising efforts.

We wish to thank those foundations for their generous support and for their concern for San Francisco's future: the San Francisco Foundation, the Rosenberg Foundation, the Gerbode Foundation, the Columbia Foundation and the California Council for the Humanities.

We also wish to thank those who have so generously given their time and expertise to help us in our work — especially the League of Women Voters, the Barristers, students, attorneys, booth-tenders and all those groups who sponsored discussion meetings and attended our public hearings. We could never have done it without you. ***—The Charter Commissioners***

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEW CHARTER

ISSUE	OLD CHARTER	NEW CHARTER
Who is in charge of city government?	Fragments responsibility for running the city among elected as well as appointed officers — the mayor, supervisors, controller, boards and commissions, the CAO. Thus, the buck is passed from one officer to another, and no one is held accountable; also, the CAO is appointed for a 10-year term, the Controller for life.	Places the ultimate responsibility for governing the city with elected officials, who are responsible to the voters and can be removed if they do not perform well. The CAO serves for 4 years, the Controller for 6. If they perform badly, they can be removed.
Money	Does not require listing of all income and expenditure by the city, e.g., CETA, Community Development, and other federal funds may not show in the total city budget. This could mean that as much as $50 million in state and federal money might not show up in the budget.	Requires that **all** monies received and **all** monies spent by the city appear to the extent possible in the budget.
	No deadline for financial statement. San Francisco's bond rating was suspended recently because the statement, as of August 1, 1980, was 14 months late.	Requires the controller to complete financial statement on time and to use generally accepted accounting principles.
	Specifies a piecemeal budget procedure in which the different branches of government are not coordinated with one another.	Institutes a financial system in which the mayor and the board of supervisors are required to work together to plan, fund, and produce city policy.
Arts and Promotion	Has no provision for supporting the arts and promotion.	Provides financial support from the hotel tax (paid by tourists and other visitors) for arts, both neighborhood and citywide, and for promotion. Studies show that every public dollar spent for arts and promotion generates at least $3 spent on hotels, taxis, restaurants, etc. This measure will help keep jobs in San Francisco.
Red Tape	Spells out lengthy bureaucratic procedures; as a result, many businesses refuse to bid on city jobs, and the efficiency of government departments is hampered.	Cuts out rigid detail which adds to city's cost of buying goods and services. Eliminates wasteful procedures.
City Employees	Locks the city into wage formulas, which in 1979 boosted the city budget by $40 million (and is estimated to cost $65 million next year). Forbids strikes.	Permits collective bargaining when both the city and a union agree to it; provides a way out of the expensive wage formulas for the city, and an opportunity for the unions to negotiate changes in working conditions. Forbids strikes.
Simplicity	Was written in 1932 for requirements of a much different period. It includes complex language; some provisions conflict with each other. Lawyers then must determine what was meant. This charter has been amended about 600 times, and has become an out-dated patchwork.	Is shorter and far simpler. Provisions do not conflict with one another, and were written to address the problems of today's city government. This charter is far easier for the average person to understand.

CHARTER UPDATE

SAN FRANCISCO
CHARTER COMMISSION

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Charter Revision: What's it all about?

The answers to this question can be found in a lively 10-minute slide tape presentation produced for the Charter Commission by Ron Atwood.

The show portrays the role of charters in San Francisco's colorful history, interviews members of the public to find out what they would like to see in a new charter, and graphically explains the problems found in our current charter.

The show has been enthusiastically received by the many groups who have seen it so far. Here are some of their comments:

"Nothing could improve this excellent production."
—a member of the Better Business Bureau.

"I'm impressed that a multi-media presentation was used. One gets very bored with hearing only from the 'experts'."
—a City employee.

"It raises some of the questions I have about our city. I didn't even know before this that we had a charter."
—a citizen who saw the presentation in the City Hall rotunda.

To schedule a showing for your group or organization, call 552-7887 or 751-3120.

Photo by C. Malcolm Thompson